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THE
SORROWS
OF
MATILDA.

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OF

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THE
SORROWS OF MATILDA,

A
NOVEL

IN
TWO VOLUMES:

THE
Juvenile Attempt
OF
A YOUNG LADY.

VOL. I.

London.

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1798.



THE
SORROWS OF MATILDA

NOVEL

TWO VOLUMES

A YOUNG LADY

VOL. I

AMSTERDAM

Printed and Sold by J. H. van der Linde, in the Strand

TO
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
DUTCHÉSS OF YORK.

MADAM,

TO presume to offer the
following Pages to your
Royal Highness's notice,
might be deemed unpardon-
able,

able, did not the world know that every thing tending to promote female Virtue and Happiness, to you is highly interesting.

Your Patronages, your Charities, and your Example illustrate the Subject; but were I not protected under these favourable Circumstances, the Offerings of an infant Pen to the Interests and Happiness of her own Sex,

Sex, would strongly plead
for my excuse.

Though Hereditary Honours, and Illustrious Ancestry entitle your Royal Highness to the highest Rank, yet the brightest Jewels of a Diadem shine with diminished lustre, when compared to the irresistible amiableness of your Humanity.

That

That you may long
enjoy the heart-felt satis-
faction flowing from such
exalted Virtues is the ardent
prayer of

Your

Royal Highness'

Most Obedient,

Most Respectful Servant.

THE AUTHOR.

to look to for protection was a devoted
 Father, who, by his cruelties, had
 THE
 partly caused her mother's death.

SORROWS

Alas!—cried the dejected fair one,
 —I fear the loss of my dear parent,
 OF
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 ving now no mother to take my part,
 or plead excuse for the little foibles
 my age is subject to." These sugges-

ions were but too well founded; for his
 severity increased daily, and her treat-
 ment proved worse and worse. Matil-

MATILDA was arrived to her
 seventeenth year, when that
 affliction beset her which often leaves
 her sex destitute and forlorn. She lost
 her mother, who was an affectionate
 wife, a tender parent, and a kind mis-
 tress. Matilda saw herself bereft of all
 parental care; the only friend she had

to look to for protection was a severe Father, who, by his cruelties, had partly caused her mother's death.

“ Alas !—cried the dejected fair-one. —I fear the loss of my dear parent, instead of softening the moroseness of my father’s temper will increase it ; having now no mother to take my part, or plead excuse for the little foibles my age is subject to.” These suggestions were but too well founded ; for his severity increased daily, and her treatment proved worse and worse. Matilda knowing no cause for such usage, resolved to reason with him on the subject, in the hope of awakening those paternal feelings, due from a father to a child. She addressed him in these words

66 Sir,

“ Sir, forgive the liberty I take, but since the death of my mother, I have experienced a coldness from you which I am unconscious of meriting; if I deserve it, tell me my faults, and I will correct them.” He answered in a severe tone, “ obey my commands, and then I shall believe you. Mr. Knight has just been here, and informed me of the regard he honors you with, which I find you disdain; but if your pride will suffer you to submit, meet him here this evening;—refuse, and you shall repent it.” He then left her to meditate alone on his unparental command.

Mr. Knight, the only son of a Sir Thomas Knight, had frequently avowed his passion for Matilda, who met it with disgust and aversion, as his person and manners were disagreeable to

her; and, besides, she had no wish to enter into that arduous state, called matrimony, at so tender an age; she therefore determined, whatever cruelty her father enforced on her, no torture on earth should compel her to marry the man she disliked. With this determination she somewhat composed her mind till the trial arrived.

She saw her father no more that day, but in the evening he introduced Mr. Knight, as her Lover, and then left him to declare his passion, and Matilda to reject it; they were no sooner alone than he took her by the hand, and said: “ Dear Matilda, why meet the man who adores you with such coldness? I have gained your father’s consent to make you mine, and let me hope to gain yours; accept my love, and enjoy peace and happiness
for

for ever. It is your parent's command, and my only wish—Oh! could those lovely eyes but read my pain, they sure would not refuse to alleviate it."

" Sir—replied Matilda—it is, to my sorrow, my father's command, and it gives me pain that I cannot obey, but if I am forced to marry the man I am certain I can never enjoy happiness with, that force I will not long survive."

Oh!—he replied—I am happy to find you are an enemy to that form, called marriage, as it gives me room to hope we shall be happier without. That form with the vulgar, is of importance, because their want of sense and feeling prevent their being constant without that tie; but many live

A 3

happy

happy, and why should not we do the same, united by love alone."

Matilda prevented his going on any further by rising from her chair, and, with fury flashing from her eyes, said: "what is it you mean, that under my father's roof you dare insult me thus?" Her father who had been all this time listening to hear how Matilda received her insulter, now entered the room, and, with a blow he gave her on the head, felled her to the ground.

She lay speechless for some time, and upon recovery threw herself at her father's feet, and implored his mercy. "Oh, my father!—she cried—you are the only friend I have, do not desert me. I have lost my mother, and you should soothe my sorrows. Oh! did you know how that villain
has

has insulted me, you would not suffer your daughter to behold him more."

"Madam,—he replied—remember, you shall suffer for this insolence—to-morrow I shall deliver you to the care of this gentleman, who will bestow more kindness on you than such behaviour deserves; whatever he has said was with my consent, remember, that neither your rank, nor fortune gives you reason to expect a gentleman so much your superior; I therefore think you are honoured with his affections: gladly accept his offer, and be content without that bait of fools, called marriage. To-morrow I shall, thank God! be rid of you, and till that time, Madam, I shall confine you to your room, where I hope your good sense and reflection will get the better of your obstinacy. Saying these words they

they quitted the room, carefully locking the door, and left Matilda to bemoan her hapless fate. She threw herself on the sofa, and lay contemplating the prospect before her. Knight showed his vast affection for her when her father used her in so cruel a manner, he never even once strove to appease him, which proved his regard was not founded in honor or affection. Matilda's lovely form, modest looks and gentle accent, craving protection from a cruel parent, one would suppose would have softened even a savage to pity; but it did not seem the least affecting to him.

The next day seemed dedicated to our forlorn one's ruin; as there appeared no possible means for her escape; therefore ruin seemed inevitable. She lay in a labyrinth of thought some hours,

hours, when she was disturbed by some one gently opening her door. Raising her head, she perceived, by the light of the moon, two men enter, and upon enquiring what was their business in her apartment, they soon gave her to understand they were house-breakers; and said that as they had the good fortune to find no one in the house but herself, they were determined to improve the fortunate opportunity and search it all over. "What—said Matilda—is there no one in the house but me?" She then begged them to treat her with mercy, and informed them of the cause of her thus being confined; when they told her, if she would shew them where her father's money and valuables lay, they would procure her liberty.

"Alas!—

“ Alas !—said Matilda—my father is only a poor curate, I pray you spare his little all, when that is gone he will have nothing to support old age.” One of the men in a fierce tone replied, “ tell us, or this moment is your last ! comply with our desire, and we will set you at liberty, and see you safe out of the wood ;—in our opinion, a father that for the sake of a little gain would be the cause of his daughter’s ruin, does not deserve consideration.” She then told them that in the next room to her they would in a desk, find all he had, they then left her, and soon after returned to perform their promise. The house stood on a common on the border of a wood, through which they had to pass, which terrified Matilda almost to despair. The robbers had a savage appearance, and as they had been guilty of one crime, she thought

thought they would not hesitate at another. She looked round and took a last farewell of that once happy mansion, and then trembling followed her guides, with her eyes fixed on the ground. They were got half through the wood, when Matilda suddenly missed them, and upon looking round, saw two men coming up the wood, at the sight of whom, Matilda supposed the thieves had fled. She had just time to hide behind a tree, when by the light the moon conveyed, she saw it was her father and Mr. Knight; her fright was so great, that she fell in a swoon; how long she continued in it she could not tell, but, on recovering, she saw the dawn of day break through the sky, and morning show her glittering head; the merry lark began to tune his harmonious lays, and all looked cheerful and gay, but our hapless fair. From
shade

shade to shade she roved, yet, wander-
 ing found no place to rest her wretch-
 ed head. She imagined she heard some-
 body hallow, whom she thought was
 in search of her, therefore she ran out
 of the wood as fast as the apprehen-
 sion of being taken back to ruin could
 carry her.

She came into a field by the side of a road,
 where tired and breathless with fear,
 she laid herself down, and, weeping,
 exclaimed "How hard a lot is mine,
 from every pleasure cast, each maid I
 see is happy and gay, while I in want
 and misery repine. To seventeen years
 I am arrived, yet no better prospect can
 I see, but melancholy and seclusion
 from every eye, I was not worth my
 parent's care, so wretched was I born:
 more misery I foresee—no fortune, no
 friend—yet still in virtue's honour'd
 path

path steadfast will I ever tread," she had now recovered sufficiently to proceed.

A long way she had roved when she perceived some poor wanderers, like herself, advance towards her, she once thought of avoiding them, but again she thought why should I fear them, because they are poor; perhaps they have more honor than their superiors. With this resolution she kept on her way, and past them. They were some poor tinkers with their backs loaded with baggage. Sorrow and fatigue were strongly imprest in their visages. Matilda's distress was easy to be seen by her uncovered head, her dishevelled hair, and pale countenance; they looked at her as with pity, but without speaking, continued their route, and Matilda hers.

She found by the mile-stone, she had now wandered ten miles from home; almost famished with hunger, and worn out with fatigue, she sat herself down to rest awhile, when a woman advanced towards her, saying, "you seem in distress, Miss, is it in my power to give you any relief?"

"Alas!—replied Matilda—I am in want of both a house and friend, yet wish not to encroach on any one."
 "Then I think I can afford you both—she added—my home is a lowly one, but if you can be content with it, it is at your service."

Matilda thankfully accepted her offer, and was happy she had found such a friend, as the stranger's appearance was decent and prepossessing.

She

She returned home with her, to a rustic cot, where she took some refreshment, and Mrs. Jones, her new friend, begged her to lay down, as she seemed tired. Matilda gladly accepted her kind offer, and was so exceedingly fatigued that she slept till evening, and awaked greatly refreshed. She thought it best to inform Mrs. Jones, how she became exposed to the charity of strangers; as, most frequently, a female without friends is thought but slightly of. She therefore in a few words, made her acquainted with her history. Mrs. Jones compassionated her situation, and said she knew a lady who had been a very good friend to her family, and perhaps would be so to Matilda, when she knew the trials she had undergone in adhering to the paths of virtue.

While they were thus discoursing an elegant carriage drove up to the door, in which Mrs. Jones said was the lady, her benefactress. When she entered the cot, she seemed rather surprised at seeing Matilda, as her person and manner, plainly denoted that she was in a home much inferior to her rank.

Lady Harvey enquired after Mrs. Jones's daughter, who was ill of a fever, she then begged to know in what manner Mrs. Jones came honored with the company of so agreeable a young lady, as Matilda; this was a good introduction for Mrs. Jones to implore her assistance in protecting our forlorn one.

She no sooner heard her story, than she said it gave her great pleasure, to have it in her power to protect and reward

ward a young lady, who had run the hazard of so many dangers, to avoid dishonour; this humble dwelling is much inferior to the one you have been used to, I am certain; therefore, as you have had the misfortune to lose your mother, let me supply her place." Matilda modestly thanked her.

The kindness of a lady, so great a stranger, surprised her much; but it is often the case; we meet with more kindness from strangers, when in distress, than we do from those who call themselves friends; for while we can entertain them, they court our acquaintance, but when we can do that no longer, they desert us. She then desired Matilda would return home with her, wished Mrs. Jones might recover her child, and took her leave. The poor woman replied " she feared

B 3

not,

not, but said it gave her great pain, lest by her kind enquiries after her, she should take any infection." Her ladyship answered "had it not been for my unfortunate son, you and your daughter might have still been happy; therefore as he was the cause, I think it my duty to attend her."

Matilda then thanked Mrs. Jones for all her kindness, and promised to see her again in a few days. They had ten miles to go, which gave Matilda pleasure, as she thought the farther she went from home the better. Lady Harvey asked Matilda, who her mother was, before she married? Matilda told her she was a Miss Stevens, the daughter of Sir Thomas Stevens, "good heavens!—exclaimed her ladyship—are you the child of my long-lost friend? we went to school together, where

where we formed an intimate acquaintance; but when she married your father, her own friends and mine, were so much displeased they would not suffer me to speak to her; and when I became my own mistress, I enquired after her, and heard that both her and her husband had suddenly left the country, and were never heard of since. But, added my lady, it gives much greater pleasure to succour the daughter of a friend, than a stranger. She then desired Matilda would give her an account of her mother's death. Matilda replied—"Alas! I am sorry it is not in my power to oblige you; upon my mother's being taken ill, she desired to see me, having something to communicate which concerned my future happiness. My father hearing the servant deliver the message, said, he thought I had better not go; for

for as she seemed so certain of death, taking leave of me might hasten her end. I complied with his desire: she again sent the same message, when he returned for answer, that he knew her reason for so strongly pressing to see me, but he was determined I should not go. I knew his cruelty to her, but to see him so hardened at her death, surprised me greatly.

For fear I should disobey his command, he kept me confined till she died. "Good God!—exclaimed lady Harvey—what a brutal wretch must he be, to refuse a mother on a death-bed, the sight of her child."* Here Matilda saw the tears stream down lady Harvey's cheeks. It gave her pleasure to see her sufferings lamented by more than herself. They were now arrived at home; a more elegant house,
Matilda

Matilda never saw ; the park, and gardens which surrounded it, were beautiful. Her ladyship had three sons, who resembled their mother in every personal advantage ; they received Matilda very politely, and paid great attention to her, especially Mr. Ernest Harvey, the eldest, who upon hearing her story, expressed great concern, and promised her his eternal friendship and protection.

CHAP II.

Mrs. Jones's history—Matilda meets with great kindness from lady Harvey—an accident, which gives Matilda a lover.

FORTUNE now seemed to seem-
ed to smile on Matilda; she was
protected by a worthy lady, who
assured her she should, while she lived,
never want a friend. The next morn-
ing lady Harvey begged Matilda to
take the carriage and call on Mrs.
Jones, as she wished to know how the
poor girl was; Matilda obeyed, and
found the poor woman in great distress.
She said her daughter had been in
several fits during the night. Ma-
tilda expressed her concern at hear-
ing she was so much worse. “ Ah!

—replied

—replied the mother—excuse me if I tell you the cause of her illness, and it is proper, that you should know my history, as it will make lady Harvey appear more amiable in your eyes, and guard you against that deceitful young gentleman, Mr. Harvey.

“ Know then, I was the daughter of a farmer in a neighbouring village, where lady Harvey resided; when I was but sixteen, my father had an execution sent into his house, which distressed my mother so much, that before our goods were taken away, she died, my father for the trifling sum of ten pounds was sent to prison; and so great was our distress, that had it not been for the kindness of lady Harvey, me and my two sisters must have gone to the workhouse.

She

She took me to attend her, and my sisters she sent to school; indeed, the kindness she every day bestowed on our family, merited the utmost affection; and I looked upon her more as a mother, than a mistress.

I had been with her a year, when lord Harvey died; he left her with four small children, the youngest of whom, followed its father soon after: The death of my lord, and the child, so hurt her ladyship, that I was doubtful of her recovery.

As my happiness depended on her life, the thoughts of her children, who had now strongly interested my affections, being left fatherless, together with my father's deplorable situation, made so deep an impression on my mind, that I found my health daily impaired.

impaired. My lady perceiving an alteration in me, desired to know the cause, I said I could not, unmoved, behold her unhappy, and my father's being so long in prison, had affected me so much, and was so continually preying on my spirits, that I feared I should not live to see him freed. I had never before informed her of his being confined, which she seemed greatly displeased with. I replied, that I was fearful of trespassing on her goodness too much. She then gave me twenty pounds, and desired me to liberate him directly; having effected his release, she hired him to look after one of her farms.

At this time Mr. Jones paid his addresses to me, which I, then young and foolish, received. My lady hearing of it, questioned me on the subject,

and finding me not deny it, said, if I thought I could be happy with him, it would make her happy to see me so; therefore she would forward the match, which she kindly did, and put us in business.

Mr. Jones soon tired her with that vice, which brings many to ruin, drunkenness. We had not been married a year, when we were obliged to give up trade and retire, solely dependent on her ladyship's kindness, when she again put him in business, and he again renewed his former fault, and all his friends forsook him.

Finding himself deserted, he enlisted for a soldier, went abroad, and we have never heard any more of him. I had one daughter, which when grown up, lady Harvey engaged her as her maid,

maid, and that cruel young gentleman, Mr. Ernest, born to charm all hearts, but deceive all eyes, got acquainted with her, and to her shame, and my sorrow, compassed her ruin; but as her repentance has been the cause of her illness, I am inclined to forgive her—happiness I can never taste again. The reflection of being thought honest, and those who belonged to me so, was all the comfort I enjoyed, and with that I was content, but that comfort is now gone; as for my child, her health is so much impaired, I do not expect her recovery. My lady is very kind, and was it not for the bounty she bestows on us, we should have nothing to support nature with; but she assures us we shall never want. I hope, Miss, you will have too much sense to attend to the deceitful and insinuating Ernest. Matilda thanked

her, and said, she hoped that God, who was the foundation of all virtue, would protect hers, and enable her to contemplate with disdain, any dishonourable allurements that might be practised to betray her from the paths of virtue. She thanked her for her kind advice, and promised to send or call in a day or two. On her return, her ladyship was greatly hurt at the account she gave of the unfortunate girl, but in a few days was consoled by the news of her being much better.

Matilda was now settled with lady Harvey, who bestowed all the kindness of a mother on her; introduced her to all her acquaintance, and wherever she went Matilda was her happy companion. Before the house was a fine canal, and on it a pleasure-boat, in which

which, as Matilda had a taste for singing, they frequently enjoyed the summer evenings, when our fair one entertained them with her melodious voice. One evening as they were taking their usual recreation in the boat, Edward, the youngest son fell into the water, Matilda instantly called a servant, who by his alacrity, saved him from being drowned. Thus she happily became instrumental in saving his life; for her ladyship's fright rendered her incapable to call assistance.

Matilda retired late that evening, but rose early the next morning, whose serenity drew her into the garden, where she had been but a few minutes when she heard a rustling among the trees, which rather alarmed her, as she thought no one was up in the house

besides herself; but presently seeing Edward advance, convinced her to the contrary. “Heavens—he exclaimed—is it my Matilda? I did not expect to have been so honored this morning. Ah lovely Matilda!—added he—what can repay the obligations I am under to you?—had it not been for you—continued he—taking her by the hand—I should not now have had the pleasure to behold the angelic girl who has made the conquest of my heart; I fear it will never be in my power to be sufficiently grateful to the preserver of my life.”

Matilda determined not to understand him, lest it should lengthen a conversation which was very unpleasant to her; she therefore replied “If you wish to reward any one, Sir, let it be
the

the servant who at the hazard of his own life preserved yours." Edward was a youth no body could dislike, as both his person and manner were engaging, but Matilda knowing how greatly it would offend his mother if she attended to what he said, determined to treat him with coolness; as it would be ungrateful to displease a friend that had been so kind to her when in distress. He therefore perceiving her silent, said, "I fear my regard for you is disagreeable.

"Sir—replied Matilda—I have too much sense to form an affection that I am certain would totally destroy my peace and happiness for ever, and if such idle thoughts invaded my bosom, I should certainly check them."

"Ah!—he answered—happy is it for those who can set such a resolution,
mine

mine has taken too deep a root to be removed, but you seem to think me unworthy your attention." Matilda begged he would excuse her leaving him there, as she had promised her ladyship to call her early; for they were going a few miles from home that morning.

"Alas!" said he—I fear it is only an excuse to be released from the importunity of a sighing, unfortunate lover, if the avowal of my passion is disagreeable, I will endeavour to be silent on the subject, till you conceive a more favourable opinion of me. Ernest now approached them, and Edward was obliged to leave Matilda, who was very uneasy lest they might have been discovered together.

She

She had often boasted that she was sure no person could ever gain her affections, but she now found herself mistaken; there was something so placid, so charming in his address and person, that he made no little impression on the heart of Matilda; but the superiority of his birth and fortune made her resolve to suppress the strong partiality she felt for him, and studiously avoid forming any closer acquaintance with him than his being the son of her benefactress obliged her to; for she was certain her lowliness would cause all his friends to turn their backs upon him, should they suspect he harboured any serious thoughts of her, therefore prudence forbade her to think of him.

“ Good Heavens! said Matilda—
how hard it is that lovers should be
the source of all my misfortunes, I
could

could have continued with my father, had it not been for Mr. Knight, but for virtue's sake I was obliged to fly—here I might be happy, were it not for the unfortunate passion of this handsome youth. Alas! alas! Sorrow and trouble are my constant companions.

One day at dinner, Lady Harvey observed that as Edward had not finished his studies, she meant him to go to Oxford for a year or two, and therefore desired him to prepare the following week for his departure. This Matilda was not sorry to hear, as she hoped absence might make them forget each other. While she was thus meditating she received a note from a young lady, the daughter of a friend of Lady Harvey, to invite her to tea that evening, Matilda left the answer to her ladyship, and Ernest hearing the contents

contents of the note, sent his compliments to Mr. Brown, the lady's brother, and if he was not engaged he would do himself the pleasure of paying him a visit the same evening.

This was very unpleasant news to Matilda; for as they had four miles to go she supposed he would accompany her in the chariot, and as she was acquainted with his character, was much alarmed at the idea of being alone with him in the carriage. She once thought of acquainting her ladyship with her fears; but she entertained so good an opinion of her son that she was afraid it might offend her.

The chariot was now at the door, and Matilda handed into it by the object of her apprehension. They were no sooner gone from the house than Ernest
took

took her by the hand—which she did not suffer him long to retain—thou lovely girl,—said he—permit me to acquaint you with what I think you already know; as you have avoided me only when alone; but it is impossible to live under the same roof with you, and remain insensible to those beauties which were bestowed on you to enslave mankind, but may I flatter myself I am not disagreeable to you?

“No, Sir,—replied Matilda—I esteem all who belong to a lady who has been so kind to me.” Then let us term that love—said he—and make your Ernest blest. Sir—answered Matilda—I regard you as the son of my benefactress, and ever shall, but to hold you in any other light I must beg to be excused. I would thank you
to

to change the subject of your conversation; if not, I had rather walk to Miss Brown's, than be compelled to attend to so improper a conversation."

"I am sorry—said he—you are so soon offended; you were just mentioning my mother's kindness, which certainly deserves thanks; and as you have no friend but her, methinks you should not treat her son so unkindly."

Matilda thanked him for reflecting on her misfortunes; she said "Had God prolonged my mother's life I should not have been exposed to these cruel and unmanly reflections." She now found him the dangerous youth Mrs. Jones had told her to avoid, and that he was not contented with depriving one family of happiness, but wished to deprive her also of the same blessing.

They now arrived at the house, when he in a low voice, said—I hope I shall be able to reason with you as we return. Matilda, now feared that her happiness would be entirely destroyed in the family.

Miss Brown seemed a sensible good natured young lady which induced our forlorn one to make her the confidant of her sorrows; she therefore informed her of the unpleasant situation she had been in with Ernest, and begged she would prevent her returning home alone with him.

In the course of conversation Matilda discovered a rival in her companion, and that she was the object of her jealousy. This discovery was far from displeasing to our heroine, as she thought Miss Brown would be the

the more eager in assisting her—She bade Matilda not to make herself uneasy, for she would return with them in the chariot.

Matilda spent the evening with great anxiety as she did not know how Miss Brown would contrive to accompany them home, as he was a man of so violent a character, she was doubtful what the event might be.

At an early hour he proposed going home, when Miss Brown said as the evening was so fine she would take a ride with them. As she spoke these words, Ernest regarded Matilda with such a revengeful countenance that he terrified her extremely ; so that had she been alone she certainly would have fainted. When he handed her into the chariot he said—mention what has pass-

ed—to any one else, and you shall repent it.

His conversation, look, and manner, convinced Matilda that he was bent upon her ruin: her hopes of happiness again were groundless, and horrid imaginations crowded so thick upon her fancy that she could not refrain weeping bitterly; nor did her tears cease to flow till they were near home.

Miss Brown took no notice of her grief as she was acquainted with the cause. Ernest enquired if his brother's going to Oxford was the cause of her sorrow, as she seemed so greatly affected upon its first being mentioned. Matilda, lost in grief, had only power to say;—Sir, if my tears offend, you will soon be rid of them.

CHAP. III.

*The consequence of Matilda's not favouring
Ernest's addresses.*

THEY were now arrived at home, when Miss Brown enquired for her ladyship, the servant told her she was gone to fetch Miss Matilda, Ernest observed that as his mother was gone to Miss Brown's he would return with her and see her safe home.

Matilda and Miss Brown now parted, and our forlorn one entered the drawing-room, where throwing herself on

the sofa a croud of melancholy thoughts rushed into her mind.

“ She exclaimed “ Oh, Heavens! protect a wretched maid from ruin. Oh, where shall I fly, in what place shall I hide my sorrows !”

Being absorbed in grief, she did not perceive Edward, who was in the room. He sat himself by her side, and said—good Heavens ! Matilda, how is it possible that one so handsome, so blest with personal charms, and friends who think themselves happy in your acquaintance, can have cause for so much grief.”

Matilda replied, her sorrows were best known to herself. “ I hope—said he—you have no secret cause for grief—tell me your sorrows, and let me

me speak comfort to your bosom; but oh! would you give me a return for that heart your charms have stolen from me, how happy would be the lot of Edward!

Matilda replied—"was I inclined to favour the affection you honour me with, sense and prudence forbid it."

"What?—said he—is my regard for you so horrid, that sense and prudence forbid its meeting with a kind reception?"

"Yes—said Matilda,—because it would make you miserable, and your mother who has been so kind to me, unhappy; besides, my fortune and birth prevent it."

Fortune

"Fortune and birth—cried the noble youth—are vain deceivers where peace and affection are not united. We could live happier in a cot, constant to each other, than in a palace where there was no affection—those lovely eyes have stabbed my heart so deep that without you I never more can enjoy happiness."

Henry, his brother, came in and released Matilda from this unpleasant conversation. Observing Edward's confusion, he said—you seem in trouble, Matilda? I hope you will avoid more. She thanked him, and said she had had troubles, but she hoped they were now over.

Henry seemed a sensible, serious young man, and whenever any dispute
arose

arose in the family he never interfered; therefore Matilda hoped he would not mention what he had now witnessed.

Soon after her ladyship and Ernest returned. Matilda sat with them some time, when perceiving herself treated with a cold indifference, she retired to rest, endeavouring to forget her sorrows in the arms of sleep.

She now thought that some body had been prejudicing her in the favour of her ladyship, as she shewed such a marked coldness towards her; far different from what she had ever done before.

The morning had hardly dawned before she left her bed, and walked about

about her chamber, contemplating on the past events.

Henry surprising Edward and her together gave her great uneasiness, but as he seemed to compassionate her forlorn situation, she flattered herself he would not disturb her peace.

Approaching the door, she saw a letter on the floor which she supposed had been shoved under it, she took it up, and read as follows—

“From the first day I had the pleasure of seeing you, your polite manner and agreeable conversation interested me greatly in your favour. I therefore take the liberty to guard you against the dangers that I fear will befall you. Avoid, if possible, going from home to-day,
“ which

“which may avert a mischief that
 “threatens you. Doubt not this in-
 “telligence, as it is from your sincere
 “friend, though unknown”.

This kind intimation alarmed Ma-
 tilda exceedingly. She threw herself
 on the bed, and it was sometime be-
 fore her aching heart could find relief,
 by a shower of tears; at length she
 exclaimed, oh, my God! what have I
 done that thy afflicting hand bears so
 feverely upon me. Wherever I go
 fresh woes attend my steps.

She lay in this desponding state,
 a prey to the most bitter reflections,
 till interrupted by Lucy, her ladyship's
 maid, who rap'd at the door, and
 told her that her lady desired to see
 her. Matilda tremblingly obeyed.

Upon

Upon entering her ladyship's apartment she saw her dressing as if preparing for a journey, which excited her surprize, as she seldom or never rose till ten, and it was then scarcely day light.

Lady Harvey informed her she was going a few miles that morning, and desired she would get ready to accompany her.

Matilda could not account for this mysterious journey; the letter filled her with apprehensions, and a thousand horrid ideas rushed into her mind, but which she did not long suffer herself to entertain.

She thought it impossible that a lady who had been so kind to her could intend her any harm; but she,
deceived

deceived young creature, was too soon convinced of the contrary.

They had proceeded about twelve miles from home, when they arrived at a large gothic building which her ladyship said was her castle—would Matilda wish to see it? she, unsuspecting of her ladyship's cruel intentions, answered in the affirmative, as she had never been in one.

Lady Harvey stopped the chaise, and giving a key to the servant, ordered him to unlock the gate. The man went in first, and they alighted from the carriage and followed.

Matilda was led through a number of apartments which from their antiquity and ruinous condition seemed

to have been built two or three hundred years ago.

After they had seen most part of it, her ladyship conducted her up a dark stair-case, which led to some rooms that had the appearance of cells for condemned criminals.

They entered a room rather better than the rest, though that was miserable enough; in one corner of it was a bed, a chair and a table.

Her ladyship now scornfully asked Matilda how she liked her castle. She answered, it had a horrid, gloomy aspect! "Horrid as it is—interrupted her ladyship—you must be content to become its tenant."

Content!

"Content!—cried Matilda, with horror and surprise—what can your ladyship mean?"

"I mean, said her ladyship to confine you here, till I can send away my son, whom you have endeavoured by your arts to seduce. Ungrateful wretch!—she exclaimed—after all my kindness, to treat me thus, abandoned deceiver! what a monster have I fostered in my bosom!"

"Thus, madam, you have my determination—think yourself mildly dealt with; you have been guilty of the worst of crimes; have stung me to the heart—you have planned the destruction of my dearest child, by ensnaring his affection with your artful wiles." Saying these words she carefully locked the door and returned to her carriage.

To describe the situation in which she left Matilda is impossible. Sighs, tears and sobs succeeded each other: a thousand and a thousand times she called upon Heaven to release her; but tired with useless repining, she at length grew sufficiently composed to examine her prison, to see if, haply, there were any prospect of escaping.

In her search she perceived a closet which she opened; the first objects which were presented to her view, were a dagger and a brace of pistols; and by a faint glimmering light, she perceived on the other side a door, and to her great surprize found a staircase descending from it.

She now stood on the wings of hope and despair, as she flattered herself that some of the outer doors might be unfastened,

fastened. As she descended the stairs she perceived another door which led to a garden, at the bottom of which was a large iron gate; but what a depth of despondency was our fair captive reduced to, on finding it so strongly barred and locked that it was impossible for her to get it open.

Opposite the garden was a hill whose stupenduous height prevented her having a gleam of hope, of relief from any person passing that way. She therefore gave up all hopes of assistance.

The garden bore some faint vestiges of its former beauty, but was in general overrun with weeds.

Matilda repented she did not implore Lady Harvey's mercy, but the accusation was so sudden, so unexpected, and

so undeserved, that she was struck dumb with astonishment. She wished she had not put so much confidence in Miss Brown, yet she thought it not possible that a young lady could be so base, as to propagate such falsehoods as her ladyship had accused her of. She readily excused Lady Harvey, as she was certain some cruel wretch that wished to gain her esteem had invented this black accusation against her.

A long time she deplored her wretched fate. She fell on her knees, and casting her lovely eyes to Heaven: "Oh, Almighty God!—she cried—who art compassionate to all, hear my prayer: Oh, relieve a miserable virgin, who hath always trod in the paths of honour: protect a wretched orphan, or take her from this cruel world, where

where all have conspired to make her wretched."

She now heard some one approach, and upon looking round, saw an old man, whose age claimed respect; he informed her she was under his care, and begged to comfort her sorrows.

" Alas!—said Matilda—thou venerable old man, give me liberty; or, rather, give me death; for that, and that alone can bring me comfort."

" Oh! never despair—said the old man, whose name was Gray—you are young, have many years to look for, and may still be happy."

" Yes,—replied Matilda—when that kind Being above shelters me with his arm, but not till then."—She entreated him

him to tell her the cause of her being confined ; or what crime she had been guilty of to deserve so severe a punishment ?”

“ Know you no cause for deserving it ?” — said he.

“ No — replied Matilda, with surprise — I know of none.”

He shook his head, and said — “ you seem innocent, had I thought so at first, I should not have accepted the office I have.”

Matilda again begged he would inform her the cause of Lady Harvey’s cruelty.

“ Will you keep it secret ?” — said he — “ may I be sure ?” — “ as sure as death.” —

replied

replied our hapless fair, eagerly interrupting him.

“ Know then, her Ladyship at a late hour last night, came to my humble cot, and commanded me, and my wife to attend you in the castle. She said you were a friendless orphan, whom she had taken merely out of compassion under her protection. The character she gave of you, I will not mention, as it would hurt your feelings: but I understood from her Ladyship that you had endeavoured to ensnare the affections of Mr. Ernest; that you had often told him you had a large fortune at your father's death; but when you found your enticements lost upon him, you practised the same arts to seduce his brother, who being young, and unacquainted with the allurements of your sex, easily fell into the snare which

which Ernest, having more prudence had avoided. This her Ladyship said she could rely upon, as Ernest himself had informed her, and cautioned her of the serpent she fostered in her bosom.

Having been under great obligations to her Ladyship, I could not refuse her request; but am much inclined to think you innocent; for this morning, at peep of day, Mr. Ernest came and offered me a large reward to let him sleep this night in the castle; but finding I would not agree to it, said it was of no consequence, only as he was wanting that way, it would have been convenient to him for that night. I said if his mother desired it, I could not refuse, but without her order, I must take the liberty to deny him.

“ Oh!

"Oh!—exclaimed Matilda—what a villain must he be, to blast my reputation in so severe a manner, because I would not receive his brutal passion!"

She then enquired if she was to be left alone in the castle. Mrs Gray said that his wife should wait upon her; for they lived in a little cot close by the castle.

"Sure—said Matilda—I am not to sleep alone in this gloomy place?"

He told her it was her Ladyship's order, and perhaps she might be safer, alone, as she would be freed from the temptations of the wicked. He now left Matilda, saying, his dame should bring her some refreshment, which she refused, and for several days never tasted

tasted a morsel, as she thought if she continued without, she could not long exist, when her sufferings would be at an end, and receive his blow I should

When her Ladyship heard she refused support, she ordered her to be forced, and Matilda finding it in vain to persist, consented to lead a wretched life a little longer.

The horrors she experienced as she retired to rest, is impossible to describe; she frequently awoke in the night, fancying herself being murdered. No wonder, as she never went to bed with the expectation of rising again.

These horrid imaginations pressed so continually on her mind, that she resolved to take the dagger which was in the closet, and at night lay it by her
side;

sider; little thinking she should so soon have occasion for it.

She spent that night in the same horror as usual, the thought of being alone in such a dreary place, unguarded, terrified her almost to despair.

She was ignorant for what intent they had confined her, but the old man, whose care she was under, bore so strongly the marks of a gentleman and a man of honour, that she grew somewhat composed in her thoughts, hoping that if they intended her any harm, he would not be confederate with them.

CHAP. IV.

Ernest's attempt on Matilda.

WHILE she was thus meditating, she heard a noise in an adjoining room; it seemed to be some one trying to open the door. She sat up in the bed listening a long time, resolving if any body attempted coming in, she would run into the closet, which led to a room that had a fastening, and lock herself in; but all appearing silent, she laid down and endeavoured

deavoured to lull her sorrows in the arms of sleep.

She rose early the next morning, and took a walk in the garden, which was her custom before breakfast, and as she was gathering some idle weeds which grew among the flowers, she heard a voice in gentle accent say; “ poor Matilda ! how I pity you.”

Upon turning round, she perceived Henry looking at her through the gate.

“ Is it you, Sir ?—said Matilda— I am happy to see you ; but should her ladyship, your mother, find out that you visit me, my sufferings would only be increased.”

“ Alas !—he replied—I am sorry to see you thus cruelly confined: you look

very different from what you used to do.
My heart bleeds for you."

" Ah ! then—cried Matilda—if you pity me, afford me some relief, and Heaven will reward you. Oh, think what a wretched life must mine be!—no friend to confide in, or succour my distress—a poor forlorn orphan, betrayed by all who know her."

" Ah, Matilda!—said he—I wish it were in my power to assist you, it would give me great pleasure, but continue virtuous, and rest assured you will never want a friend."

" You may remember to have found a letter in your room, I put it there. My mother's coldness to you that night surprised me much, and seeing in my brother's countenance evident marks of
anger

of anger and disappointment I was prompted to listen to their conversation after you had left the room.

I heard his unjust and wicked accusations against you with grief and astonishment; and my concern was greatly heightened when I found my mother gave credit to his falsehoods; and immediately adopt a plan, the cruelty of which, I was determined if possible to avert, by cautioning you against going out that day: but Mr. Gray draws near us; meet me here at this time to-morrow morning and I will tell you more."

He then left her, and Mr. Gray came up to her, and enquired how she had spent the night, as was always his custom.

She told him how much she had been frightened, he said it certainly must have been fancy, as nobody was in the castle but herself, which, perhaps, was true: for when we are oppressed with fear, we are frequently apprehensive of danger without a cause.

He said he was come to acquaint her that he must leave her to the care of his wife for a few days, as some business obliged him to go from home.

This unwelcome news made Matilda very unhappy, as she feared some mischief was concerting against her, in which he did not like to assist. He left her, entreating her to be comforted, as no harm could happen to her.

She spent the day in great anxiety and fear; for she had so often been deceived,

ceived, that she began to distrust every one.

When night arrived, and she was retiring to rest, she found her door would not lock, which caused fresh alarms, as it fastened very well the night before. She therefore resolved not to undress, but lay down in her clothes: when she had extinguished the light, a croud of melancholy thoughts rushed into her mind, and very fortunately kept her awake.

She had scarce lain down an hour, before she heard her door open, and the footsteps of some person in the room. Starting up, and holding open the curtain, she perceived by the faint light of the stars, a man approach her.

She

She enquired who was there? but receiving no answer, sprang from the bed, and advancing to the closet door, which led to the room that had a strong fastening, exclaimed—"Villain! come near me, and this dagger shall be thy portion!" She then ran in, locked, and barred the door, and, terrified with fear, threw herself on the floor.

"Oh, Heavens! protect me!"—she cried—She heard the wretch endeavouring to open the door, saying: "Matilda; why so obstinate? it is only your Edward."

Hearing him lay his crimes on his brother, provoked her rage the more, for she knew by his voice it was Ernest.

She

She replied—"No, thou horrid villain, I know thee too well. Oh, thou Supreme Being, above! what is it thou hast reserved me for? restore, oh restore my happiness, or shelter me in heaven!"

In this manner she past the tedious night, and early in the morning the old man's wife knocked at the door, and demanded to know the reason she was there.

Matilda replied—"she feared she was too well acquainted with the cause, to need telling."

She then desired the door might be instantly opened, for she wanted to come in. Matilda begged she would stay where she was; as she could dispense with her company.

"Open

“ Open the door immediately—she vociferated—or I will have it forced.”

“ You may do as you please—said Matilda—but I am determined to stay here, if I starve, till your husband returns, and if he does not, I will die sooner than be delivered into the hands of that villain who you have betrayed me to, during his absence.”

“ She replied—“ when he does return, you shall suffer, Miss, for charging me with such a crime.”

Matilda then heard a whisper, and the persons leave the room, which she supposed was Ernest and the woman.

She now thought herself perfectly secure, and was indulging herself thus far, when hearing her window open, she

She looked up and saw Ernest getting in.

“ Oh Heavens!—she cried—what will become of me now ?”

She flew down the staircase into the garden, where Henry was waiting, according to his promise. She had just power to run to the gate, where she sunk down in a convulsion fit, and remained a long time in a state of utter insensibility.

Upon her recovery, she found herself in a spacious apartment, very different from the one she had left. Mr. Gray was kneeling by her bed-side, and Lady Harvey standing at the foot of her bed, wringing her hands, seemingly in the utmost distress.

Matilda

Matilda anxiously enquired where she was? her Ladyship seemed surprised at hearing her speak; and in a mild tone of voice, asked her how she found herself. Saying, it was the first time she had spoke for many days.

She then told her that she was still in the castle; only removed to a more commodious apartment.

Matilda thanked her, and as she supposed she was acquainted with all the circumstances of her illness; enquired after Henry; begging her Ladyship would inform her how she was rescued from the hands of her cruel son.

Lady Harvey burst into tears, and desired she would never mention her son's misconduct any more, and as she was so much mended, she would for
the

the present leave her to the care of Mr. Gray and his daughter, until she was able to return home.

Matilda was so weak and faint that she could scarcely thank her; but she was no sooner gone, than she faintly enquired after Henry.

“ Alas!—said the old man—can you forgive my wretched wife? She has atoned for all her faults, severely; as well as that wicked youth who has been the cause of all your sufferings.”

“ The moment he saw his brother was resolved to protect you, he took a pistol from his pocket, and with the most frantic rage levelled it at your protector, but it missed him, and shot my wife dead upon the spot.”

Here he paused, and Matilda saw the tears stream down his venerable cheeks; and the young woman was lamenting her mothers death, which, though she had faults, was natural to be overlooked by her child.

Mr. Gray continued—"can you forgive her?"

"I do—replied Matilda—therefore let us not think of her any more; when a person is dead, their crimes should be forgotten; therefore if we cannot mention them with respect, it were best not to mention them at all."

"Oh!—said Mr. Gray—we ought to do so, but there are certain times when we cannot."

As

“As soon as Ernest saw his fatal mistake, he left the castle, and has not been heard of since. When her Ladyship heard of his horrid attempt; it shocked her to such a degree, we feared she would not survive it; but as soon as she was able to leave her house, she came to see you, and seemed to repent of her cruel treatment to you.”

“Heavens! what a sight did I witness on my return; for I came home in the midst of this horrid scene.”

“Poor young lady—added he—I can pity your sufferings, for when I was young, sorrow and poverty was my lot, and now I am old, shame will bring me to the grave: my tale is woeful indeed!”

Matilda said if it was not too much trouble, she should be happy to hear his story; that reciting the misfortunes of others, might reconcile her to those which befel her every day.

“Consider Miss—said he—you have not sufficiently recovered from your alarming indisposition; therefore it is improper to enter into a long conversation at present; but when you are better, I shall with pleasure oblige you with my history.”

Matilda slept tranquilly a great part of that day, and the next morning was much better.

Lady Harvey came early in the morning, and finding her so much mended, said—“that in a week she
hoped

hoped that she should have her old companion again."

Matilda had once a great affection for her Ladyship, but her cruel and unjust treatment had lessened that affection; nor did her ladyship even deign to apologise for her cruelty, which Matilda thought requisite, as she knew she had accused her of crimes of which she was totally innocent.

THE next day Matilda's strength was so enervated that she got up, and looking in her glass, saw with some secret concern, that those charms which had once gained her friends, were with sorrow and sighs much impaired, and nearly worn away.

Mr. Gray now came to enquire for her health, and being so much better.

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CHAP. V.
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ter her health, and being so much
better,

better; he put him in mind of his promise. He said that he was come on purpose to perform it.

“Know then, I am the son of a Gentleman, who was possessed of ten thousand pounds a year. Being his only child, I was left sole heir of all his estates, which chiefly lay in the West Indies.”

“My mother lived but two years after my father, and I was but nineteen years of age when she followed him.”

“I had now no one to controul or advise me. I soon got acquainted with some young gentlemen who were strongly addicted to that fiend, the passion of gambling. They inveigled me into their destructive snares, from
which

which I found it difficult to extricate myself."

" Finding my perseverance at the gaming-table had greatly lessened my fortune, in order to retrieve which, I resolved to marry: I therefore paid my addresses to a young lady of immense fortune."

" Her father seemed to think himself honoured to have me for his son-in-law. He therefore introduced me to his daughter."

" She received me with great coldness, which he perceiving, peremptorily ordered her to prepare, for the following week he would have us married."

" She

"She mentioned no objection in the presence of her father, but when we were alone, she told me her affections were already placed on one whom she thought returned them with equal warmth; and as her happiness depended on that gentleman only, she begged I would intercede with her father to prevent her being made for ever miserable.

"I was young, thoughtless and gay, it was not her I had such a regard for, but her fortune.

"I told her time reconciled us to all things, therefore she might be reconciled to me; that my affection for her was so great, that without her I should be miserable."

"The

"The poor girl threw herself at my feet, in hopes that she might move me; but I was so obstinately cruel as not to pay any regard to her supplications."

"The day was now fixed for our marriage, when I received a challenge from her lover. We met in Hyde Park the next morning; and with the first shot, the gallant youth fell dead at my feet."

"When I saw him, I did not wonder at her affection; for I think I never before nor since, saw so handsome a young man."

"Oh! how can I hope for happiness, when I destroyed so fine a couple. Excuse me, my dear Miss, but my tears flow fast whenever I call that horrid deed to remembrance."

"The "

When

“When the poor lady—continued: he—heard her lover’s unfortunate fate, she seemed quite resigned to marry me, which surprised her father and me very much, as we thought it would have produced a very different effect upon her.”

“I now, like a villain, thought myself perfectly happy in the possession of so large a fortune; but on our wedding night, I found myself wretchedly disappointed. She expressed a wish to retire some time before me, as she was somewhat indisposed.”

“About an hour after, I went to her bed-side to enquire how she found herself; when, what did I behold? oh, Heavens! my bride laying a cold breathless corpse; holding in one hand the dagger, which she had plunged in-

to

to her heart, and in the other her lover's picture. Oh, God! what a horror seized me. I took the dagger, and had I not been prevented by a servant who stood by, would have struck it to my own."

"I now saw that my ambition and thirst of wealth was the cause of that lovely creature's death. Oh, my God! thou hast not showered down thy afflictions on me for nothing. I have deserved them all—they were happy, blest with each others love, till I, like a fiend from hell, was sent to destroy their peace."

"When her father heard of her death, he raved like one in despair; cursed both himself and me. Her brother was so hurt, that he left this country,

country, and I, in honour, was obliged to return her fortune."

" Her death affected me greatly; but I am sorry to say the losing her fortune affected me more."

" I now entered the army, and on my passage to Barbadoes, to join my regiment, was taken prisoner by the Americans. While I was in confinement, a violent hurricane happened in the West Indies, which destroyed all my plantations."

" I had still one estate left in England, which brought me in two thousand a year."

" When I gained my liberty, I was apprised of my misfortunes, and was advised to go to the West Indies and look after my affairs myself."

“ I therefore mortgaged my estate, and set off upon my voyage.”

“ We had not been got many leagues from land, when a dreadful storm arose which drove us on the American coast; I was again taken prisoner, and returned to all my former hardships; a little bread and water was my chief support.”

“ Five years I endured the most cruel captivity, when with some of my fellow-prisoners I contrived my escape, and once more I returned to England.”

“ On my arrival, I found the person I left in care of my property had entangled it so much, that soon after it was foreclosed for half its value.”

“ I

"I bore all my misfortunes for some time with great fortitude and resignation, because I knew I had deserved them; but at length, drove to despair by reflection, I renewed the source of all my miseries, gambling, which involved me so much that I was arrested and thrown into the king's-bench, where I remained six years, when an act of parliament released me."

"I was now a forlorn wanderer, and had nothing to support nature with but what chance threw in my way; for I always concealed my poverty from every eye, and used to stroll from county to county, and when I could get into a barn or under a stack of hay, sheltered from the dews of night, I was content."

“ One week I wandered as far as Staffordshire, and as I passed a large house, a gentleman advanced from it, and calling me by my name, expressed great pleasure at seeing me in that country.”

“ It was some time before I recollected him, but he told me that he was Lord C— who had once the honour of my acquaintance: indeed, he was one of those companions of my youth, whose example had principally led me into most of my follies and dissipation.”

“ He begged, while I staid in that country, that I would make his house my home. I gladly accepted his offer, for I had been a stranger to a comfortable lodging many weeks. My distress was easy to be seen; indeed, he acknowledged

acknowledged that he was no stranger to my situation."

" Finding by my conversation that I was bereft of my all, and in no likelihood of obtaining a future subsistence, he, in as delicate a manner as possible, told me, that he was in quest of a tutor for his sons; and asked if it would be disagreeable to me to perform that office,—he should think himself happy if I would accept it."

" I had very early been sent to Oxford, where my attention to my studies had fully qualified me for such a situation."

" Lord C— had two sons which were entrusted to my care. For five years they received my instructions,

and the progress they made, was highly pleasing to his Lordship; who testified his satisfaction by heaping repeated favours on their teacher."

"At length an old friend of mine came to reside in that part of the country: He was a gentleman of small fortune, had a wife and daughter, the young lady was very handsome, sprightly, and sensible; her charms were too irresistible for Augustus, his lordship's eldest son, long to withstand. After a very short acquaintance he eloped with her to Scotland, where he married her."

"His lordship laid the blame of this event to my charge, and said—that had it not been for me, his son would

would have had a lady suitable to his rank.

“ Indeed, his rage became so violent, that forgetting all former marks of friendship, he discharged me like a servant who had been guilty of a breach of trust.”

“ Soon after Lady Harvey wanting a tutor for her sons, I went to her, and was happy enough to meet with her approbation.”

“ At the expiration of four years, that I had been in her ladyship's family, I married this poor unfortunate woman. Her lady allows us fifty pounds a year, which, with a few perquisites that are permitted, supported us decently.”

“ Thus.

“Thus you see, ambition, a giddy extravagance, and a fatal predilection for play, has been the source of all my misfortunes.”

“I have suffered for all my faults in this world severely; and therefore hope I shall meet with mercy in the next.”

With these words the old man ended his story.

Matilda thanked him, and asked whether he knew a Mrs. Jones? when he lived with Lady Harvey?”

He said—“perfectly well, she was a very worthy woman; and it was a thousand pities her daughter did not follow so excellent an example.”

Matilda

Matilda enquired what was become of her daughter?

He said—"that as soon as she had recovered of her illness, she left her mother and went to London."

"Shortly after her arrival in that metropolis, she became an abandoned and dissolute street-walker."

Matilda expressed her grief at finding her so lost to virtue.

"Ah! my dear—replied the old gentleman—beware of once doing wrong; for the first crime soon draws on a succession of others."

Mr. Gray now took his leave, and left his Daughter with Matilda.

The

The poor girl was inconsolable at her mother's tragical end, they sat for several hours and never uttered a syllable.

Matilda was extremely shocked at Mr. Gray's story: the untimely death of the young lady, his first wife; in particular, attracted her compassion; yet she admired her resolution; as she thought that death was preferable to living with a man whom she despised.

The misfortunes of Mr. Gray were in some measure to be pitied, but as they were the effects of his own imprudence, not so much so as though they had been inevitable; yet he repented, but that is too generally the case when it is too late.

Matilda's

Matilda's companion was a sensible, agreeable girl, and she afterwards found her very conversible.

In the evening, Matilda was so much better, that she desired her to retire, but the young woman said her Ladyship had ordered her to sleep with her till she returned home.

They had been in bed two hours, when Matilda heard the voice of a female chaunting a love-song, her notes were wild, yet the sweetness of their melody charmed our heroine: she lay listening a considerable time, when she awoke her companion, who seemed surpris'd, but listened attentively, and observed that it was very strange; for she was certain that nobody was in the castle but themselves.

The

The songstress now warbled a plaintive ditty, which lulled Matilda's companion to sleep, whilst she, engrossed by a thousand ideas, lay awake; till at length tired nature closed her weary eye-lids.

In the morning they rose early, and as Matilda had not been out for some time, the serenity of the weather induced them to walk in the wood, which was opposite the castle.

Matilda was quite charmed with her excursion; as she had for many months been confined in the most remote part of the castle.

As they approached the thickest part of the wood, they saw a beautiful young lady asleep, this certainly, said Matilda, must be the person who entertained

tertained us last night with her melodious notes.

They stood looking at her some time without speaking, lest they should disturb her, when she gently raised her head and, in the most pathetic accent, said—"is it you Ernest? ah! no, how my dreams deceive me!"

She had blue eyes, and light auburn hair, which hung in loose tresses on her lovely neck. Observing Matilda and her companion, she got up, and taking the former by the hand, said, "you wont tell of me, will you? I am sure you wont—you look too good natured."

Matilda was rather terrified, as there was a wan paleness in her looks, and

Vol. I. I a wildness

a wildness which plainly indicated her melancholy condition.

She took a picture from her bosom, and said—does this lovely face look as if it could deceive?—but dont tell of me.” Matilda assured her she would not. The strong resemblance of the picture convinced her that it was Ernest’s. “ Good God!—she exclaimed—where will this man’s baseness end? how many will he make miserable?”

The fair maniac had on a white lute-string dress, in which she had put the flowers she had gathered. She now approached Matilda, and begged that she might be permitted to decorate her hair with them.

Matilda

Matilda entreated her not to trouble herself, and enquired how she came there?

“ Ah!—replied the fair lunatic— if I let you know, you will despise me, for I have been a very bad girl— I own it—Ernest told me if I would live with him, he would make me his wife, when he came to his fortune, but he—faithless man—deceived me: he remained with me but a little, little while, and then deserted me.”

“ The people at whose house he left me, said I was a bad woman, and that they would not keep me under their roof. They said that I was mad too, but if I was, it was Ernest, that dear deceiver, who made me so.”

“ I wandered here because I thought there was nobody to torment me.” Matilda’s tears flowed fast at the melancholy fate of this young lady, who said—“ are you sorry for me? then I wish I could give you something to keep in remembrance of me; but alas! I have nothing but this picture, and I don’t like to part with that,—yet he was a cruel man—I ought not to love him, but I can’t help it.”

She burst into tears, which greatly relieved her. Matilda now requested to know her name, which, with faltering accent, and downcast eye, she said was Maria Hodges.

“ Hodges!—said Miss Gray—why, Mr. Hodges is the gentleman of the village, sure, he is not her father?”

Matilda

Matilda entreated her to write to her father, and perhaps he would forgive her and take her home.

“ Ah ! no—she replied—he is gone away ; I had rather stay with you. Matilda again entreated her to return home, when she throwing herself on the grass, and, weeping said—“ I have no home, but this.”

They then invited her to the castle, to take some breakfast with them, but she strongly refused, saying, they would send her home, and she should never see her Ernest more.”

She now became incoherent, and a certain wildness bespread her lovely countenance, which made them fear some outrage ; they, therefore, retired.

Matilda begged Miss Gray would go to Mr. Hodges, and relate the circumstance of finding the unhappy fair one, and enquire whether she was of his family.

She too soon heard that he was the father of the poor, lost, Maria.

The distracted parent hearing the situation of his child, would scarce allow himself time to call a servant to accompany him; till Miss Gray informed him that she was so very outrageous, that it would be impossible to bring her home without force.

He then gave her to understand that she had left him about a month ago, with whom, or how, he was totally ignorant; and that he never since could hear any tidings of her.

Matilda

Matilda who was standing at her window when they came to fetch her, went down to meet Mr. Hodges, in hopes that she might reconcile him to his daughter, but was happy to find there was no occasion for her intercession.

The moment Maria saw her father, she threw her arms round Matilda, earnestly soliciting her protection. She said he would take her home, and then she should never see her Ernest more.

Mr. Hodges after much difficulty, prevailed on her to go home with him, by telling her Ernest was there, waiting her coming.

When she left Matilda her distraction of mind plainly evinced that she did not place any great faith in her father's assertion;

assertion; for she departed wringing her hands and tearing her hair; vowing that if she did not find him at home, she would not live another moment.

When Matilda returned to the castle, Lady Harvey was come to take her home, and as she was so much better, desired her to get ready immediately.

Matilda flattered herself that her ladyship had repented of her cruelty, and would treat her with the same affability that she did before the late unhappy circumstances happened, but she was most miserably deceived; she however avoided mentioning the poor Maria, lest it should cause her ladyship a new source of unhappiness.

As

As soon as they arrived at home, Lady Harvey with an asperity both of voice and countenance that convinced our heroine that her ladyship's late kindness was feigned, and that she had to apprehend fresh injuries from her cruelty, now more strongly excited by the recent catastrophe at the castle.

She was now more closely confined than in her last abode: some refreshment was brought her by a servant, which as soon as she had taken, her ladyship sent her some plain-work, and a message, importing that she expected her future industry would make amends for her past idleness; for that she must not expect to lead the lazy life she had hitherto done.

In this wretched situation our forlorn fair one continued four months, when

when, sighing for the loss of liberty, and constantly at work, she took the resolution of entreating her ladyship to mitigate the severity of her captivity.

Accordingly she wrote to her ladyship; thanking her for all the kindness she had bestowed on a friendless orphan, and that whatever was in her power to oblige her in she would do with pleasure, but that her long solitary confinement, and so closely sitting at needle-work, daily impaired her health; she therefore humbly entreated her permission to walk sometimes in the garden, which would enable her to perform her work with more ease.

The servant returned and said her ladyship desired to see Matilda, she obeyed the summons, and tremblingly followed
the

the domestic directly to her ladyship's presence.

On her entering the room lady Harvey cried in an elevated tone of voice —“ creature what do you mean by sending such a message to me ?

Matilda burst into tears, and replied —“ Alas ! my Lady, you are happy, are blessed with every thing your heart can wish ! but are unacquainted with the bitter sufferings of solitary confinement. Oh, could you for one moment feel my miseries, sure you would pity me !”

Her ladyship deaf to the calls of humanity, and unsusceptible of the gentle feelings which should inhabit a female bosom, rang the bell with great violence,

violence, and ordered the servant to lock her in her room as before.

In this wretched and lonely manner did this hapless fair one continue for some months longer;—treated with insolence by the servant that attended her; but that is not to be wondered at; it is common with the vulgar, and, indeed with all the world, when people of rank begin to be unfortunate, to rejoice in their misfortunes.

Matilda was now in her chamber reflecting on the past scenes of happiness, which she saw would visit her in this habitation no more; she therefore determined to contrive some means of escaping from her prison, and her cruel persecutrix.

Before

Before she could arrive in the town of Cambridge, there were a great number of barracks, which alarmed that timidity, naturally inherent in the female breast, especially to pass them in the gloom of night, filled her with apprehensions, fearing she might meet with insult from the straggling soldiers; however, sooner than thus continue the innocent victim of such unrelenting cruelty, ever studious in contriving fresh mortifications, which almost drove her to distraction; and made her weary of her existence: she therefore, with a firm determination, resolved to risk the hazard of any danger that might happen in consequence of her endeavours to escape from her captivity.

When night arrived, she found her resolution fail her, a thousand un-

thought-of perils now presented themselves in various shapes to her distracted imagination. She trembled to think of the probability, that this act might involve her in disasters more dangerous, and in miseries, if possible, more afflicting than those which she was endeavouring to avoid.

A thousand different plans at once agitated her ideas. At last she resolved on going to Mrs. Jones, and solicit her assistance, but she was uncertain whether that good woman had it in her power to become her friend in the present instance, or no, as she was so entirely dependent on the bounty of Lady Harvey. She therefore altered her resolution and determined to place her reliance entirely on the dispensation of providence for a friend.

All were now retired to rest, and a solemn stillness reigned throughout the house; not a star was seen in all the hemisphere; all was dark, gloomy and awful, when our heroine prepared to put in execution her premeditated plan.

Her window was near thirty feet from the ground, which did not discourage her. She tied the sheets together, and tremblingly lowered herself down from the window.

She was now at large, and with fluttering heart, and hasty anxious step she passed the place she so much dreaded—oft times she turned her head, and with an enquiring and penetrating eye explored each bush and thicket which she passed, and to her great joy not a

soul could she discern, all was as silent as death.

She passed the barracks with great trepidation, but their inhabitants were enjoying the blessings of their peaceful slumbers, while she, a wretched, forlorn wanderer,—no home!—no friend!—no hope of protection! She had now traversed several fields and at length arrived in one from which she could find no path to extricate her; and which seemed a kind of labyrinth that baffled her utmost endeavours.

The clouds began to lour and look black, and every now and then, a faint gleam of lightning which every moment increased in strength, darted across her vision. The thunder now rumbled from afar, and slowly approached,

proached, and with it violent gusts of wind, accompanied with rain.

A tufted thicket in the midst of the field opportunely offered its friendly shade to shelter her from the tempestuous elements; the lightning had gradually arrived to such a heighth, that its blue flashes threatened not only animated nature, but even the destruction of the trees and herbage around her.

In this dreary sanctuary she held her handkerchief to her face, which partly kept the sulphureous flashes from her lovely eyes, and in this perilous state, terrified almost to annihilation, she passed a most miserable night.

The morning now began to peep through the sky, the storm had subsided,

sided, and Matilda, half dead with fatigue and terror, quitted her asylum and began to search for a home.

She had rambled many miles, when entering the town of Cambridge, she perceived at a little milliner's shop, a bill, advertising lodgings to let, after which she immediately made enquiry ; she found it consisted of but one room, which was all she had occasion for.

She informed the young woman who shewed her the apartment, that she had lived with a lady as her maid, who, from the misrepresentations of some secret enemies, had suddenly dismissed her ; and that she should be glad to continue there till she could write to her friends, and obtain their answer, or hear of some other situation.

The

The young woman informed her that her mother was from home, but would soon return, and then she was certain they would agree, if she could conveniently wait till she came in.

The young woman was at breakfast, and strongly invited Matilda to join her, which invitation she gladly accepted, being in great want of refreshment, and very much fatigued.

She had been in the house about an hour, when in came the mother, a fat, bouncing woman; she stared at Matilda with a rudeness that almost put her out of countenance. Her daughter told her that the lady was in search of lodgings, and had been looking at theirs.

“ Well

“ Well Miss—she bawled out—and how do you like it? if it will do for you, why, you shall have it for three shillings a week; but it is not a custom with me to take people without knowing them, but as I like your face, I will take you from your appearance; for I think it is impossible such a pretty young lady as you, or any body else can deceive me.

Matilda, curtsying, thanked her for the good opinion she entertained of her, and said she hoped that while she was an inmate in her house, her conduct would be such that she would have no reason to repent having received her as a lodger. She now begged leave to retire, as she was very weary.

As

As soon as she was alone, her thoughts assumed a most melancholy turn.—she was with strangers, and did not know how they might treat her.

She had a miniature picture of her mother, and a ring, which her mother, when she gave it her, earnestly desired her always to wear, and in particular, to take great care of the picture, as it might be a means of rendering her the most essential service at some future period; though, little imagining that her tender offspring would ever be in the distress, or know the miseries that awaited her.

She had but a guinea in her pocket, which, in this friendless condition, would soon be gone; alas! what was she then to do for a subsistence? she must

must part with the only remembrance she had of a deceased parent; this was a cruel stroke, and wrung her tender heart with anguish: But such were the sorrows of Matilda.

“ Alas!—cried the ever weeping fair—sure, when this world was first created, the sad distinction between what we call rich and poor was never intended?”

“ Here are some rolling in voluptuous pleasures, and riches so abundant, that they laugh at the misery of others, and call their complaints an idle tale, because they are strangers to misfortunes.”

“ Superiors both in birth and fortune ought also to be pre-eminent in virtue, and feelingly alive to the dic-
tates

tates of humanity, but, alas! few there are who use the blessings of providence to the alleviation of their unhappy fellow-beings! but were the gifts of fortune equally bestowed, there are some, who, if they were blessed with her choicest favours, would, by ambition and luxury, squander them idly away; but why should such innocent virgins as me suffer such severe and unmerited afflictions?"

"It is but little Matilda asks, and with little, a virtuous mind will be content; for grandeur and pleasure are only required to drive from remembrance the follies of dissipation, which sober reflection often shudders at."

"What is the use of superfluous wealth? it gives us friends, 'tis true,
but

but what are the use of those friends? can they protect us from the heavy hand of death? can they mitigate our pain? can they drive remembrance from a guilty conscience? oh, no!—then give Matilda just a sufficiency to support her with decency, and let her have to say, when she lays down on her bed of repose, I am virtuous, and my mind is free from guilt.”

“ There is a self-satisfaction dwelling in the minds of those who possess that treasure, virtue, and many who now enjoy all the pomp this world can afford, have fell from that pinnacle of happiness. Oh, what would they give, could they re-ascend its noble summit.”

She then went to her window, when she perceived two men on horse-back,

back, coming up the town, which alarmed her exceedingly; as she was apprehensive of their being Lady Harvey's servants, sent in pursuit of her, and were now diligently making their enquiries, but upon their nearer approach, she, to her inexpressible satisfaction, saw her mistake.

She had brought with her a small bundle of apparel, as much as she could conveniently carry, the clothes she had on being wet through by the tempestuous night she had been exposed to, that she feared she feared she should catch cold; she was therefore shewn to a chamber, where she changed them.

CHAP. VI.

*Matilda meets with great kindness
from Mrs. Holmes.*

SHE had but just time to adjust her dress when the young woman came to acquaint her that dinner was ready, and she immediately prepared to attend her.

On entering the room, she found two young gentlemen seated at table with Mrs. Holmes and her daughter, who boarded in the house; they

were

were respectfully polite to our heroine, and paid her all possible attention during dinner.

After dinner Miss Holmes requested her mother's permission to take a walk down the town, and asked Matilda to accompany her.

Matilda from her late fatigues not being disposed to make one of the party, excused herself, saying, that she had walked a great way that morning, and was exceedingly fatigued, but that some other time she would be happy to attend her.

The gentlemen also pressed her to accompany them. Observing that they belonged to the University, which was close by, and would show her the curiosities of the differ-

ent colleges; which she would find well worthy of her attention. She thanked them, but politely refused their offer.

After they were gone out, Mrs. Holmes interrogated Matilda as to what kind of situation she should like to be settled in; for it was a sad thing for young folks to be idle—as for herself, she was happy in that respect; as her Mary was as industrious a girl as ever lived.

“Alas!—replied Matilda—I have never been used to laborious work, neither have I strength sufficient to support it; but with my needle I think I can earn a subsistence, as I am a tolerable mistress of all kinds of needle-work.”

“Well—

" Well—said she—my daughter is a black-and-white milliner, and gets her living by making hats, cloaks, caps and bonnets for the ladies that live round her, and thof I say it, that should not say it, she shall not turn her back to the first milliner in Cambridge: she wants a hand to help, and if you have no objection, she shall learn you her business, and if you like you may live very happy here."

The only objection Matilda had, was a disinclination to serve behind a counter; there was a noble pride inherent in this unhappy fair-one, which made her disdain to stoop to things so much beneath her. Mrs. Holmes and the girl seemed very disagreeable companions; their vulgarity and ignorance were intolerable.

How

L 3

While

While Matilda was meditating what answer to return her—"why, la, Miss!—cried Mrs. Holmes—sure such a mortal fine lady as you will never think of going to service any where; why, you look only fit to be stuck up in a band-box; if you stay with my girl, you will be as well off as if you was in one; nay, better, for of a morning, you can work, and of an evening take a walk together. Here is a world of fine walks about Cambridge."

Matilda listened with great attention to what she said, and thought that she could live contented and happy enough with these people, as they seemed good-natured, and their manners she hoped in time she might improve.

"Well!

“ Well Miss—cried Mrs. Holmes—and what do you think of my offer?”

Matilda replied—that she was very happy that providence had favoured her so much, as to throw her in the way of such worthy friends as her, and Miss Mary, her daughter.

She seemed greatly pleased at the term, worthy friends, which our heroine had applied to them.

“ You are—said she—the politest young lady I ever saw; if you stay with me, I shall have all the young gentlemen fall in love with you.”

“ Pray don't you think my Mary is a prodigious fine girl? I assure you one of those gentlemen, you see here,

Brown

is

is violently in love with her, and would marry her if I would consent, but I think they are both too young at present, but when she comes home, you shall hear her sing."

"She has got, I am told, the finest voice in the world: she sings the song called "Brown Bet" delightfully, but, indeed, she takes after me in that respect, for when I was young, I sung like a nightingale."

Here the loquacious good lady's harangue was interrupted by the gentlemen and Mary, who returned from their walk.

"My dear—said Mrs. Holmes, addressing herself to her daughter—let us have tea, and as soon as we have done, you shall sing this lady
21 "Brown

"Brown Bet," which I am sure she will be obliged to you for." a mistress

While they were at tea a little girl, about twelve years of age, who acted in the capacity of a servant, came, running in almost out of breath, and crying "oh dear mam! there's two men at the gate, come to fetch the young lady, and they say they know she is here, and they will have her."

Matilda whose apprehensions kept her in continual alarm, immediately concluded that it was somebody sent by Lady Harvey in pursuit of her; which frightened her almost out of her senses, inasmuch, that, forgetting where she was, she exclaimed, "oh God! where will my sorrows end!"

and instantly fell back in her chair in a state of utter insensibility.

When she recovered, she found herself supported in the arms of Mr. Jason, the eldest gentleman, and Mrs. Holmes cried out, "la, my dear! what in the name of fortune terrified you now? it was only two gentlemen who came to enquire after a lady that did lodge with me formerly."

This news afforded consolation and relief to Matilda; she raised her drooping head, and with that benignant smile which ever graced her lovely countenance, replied, "you are much mistaken as to the cause of my indisposition; I was not frightened, having nothing to fear; but the cause to which I ascribe it, is over

ever fatiguing myself with walking this morning."

"Ah, poor creature!—said Mrs. Holmes—you are, as I said before, only fit for a band-box."

Matilda could not help smiling at her compliment, when somebody came into the shop, who desired to see Mary, Mrs. Holmes, in whose composition curiosity was by no means wanting, anxious to know what was the matter, instantly followed her.

Mr. Jason now took Matilda by the hand, and begged that she would not be alarmed; for he was well acquainted with the persons who had called at Mrs. Holmes'.

Matilda

Matilda pretended to be surprised at his imagining that it could be the appearance of these men that had been the cause of her fainting, and said "I am not so fortunate Sir, as to have any of my friends enquire after me, they live at too great a distance."

He looked at her with a significant smile, which plainly denoted that he was much better acquainted with her situation than she was aware of.

Mrs. Holmes and Mary returned, and Matilda appeared as cheerful as possible, lest Mr. Jason should make further enquiry, as she perceived by his manner, he was desirous of prying into her situation.

Mrs.

Mrs. Holmes was no sooner set down than she desired Mary to sing; “ for—said she—I promised the company that you should do them that favour.”

“ I assure you Miss,—addressing herself to Matilda—you will laugh most heartily; for she sings with so much humour, that it is impossible to help it.”

It was very fortunate for Matilda that she introduced this excuse for laughing; for had she been dying, it was impossible to refrain from it.

The unaccountable noise she made, and the strange faces she distorted her features into, would have moved the risible muscles of a stoic.

The two gentlemen were as much entertained as Matilda, and were almost convulsed with laughter.

When she had discontinued this horrid noise, her mother begged to know what Matilda thought of her voice?

Matilda said she certainly had a very fine voice, and that she would advise her to write to the managers of some theatre, to procure her an engagement; for she certainly would afford the audience a great fund of entertainment.

“ You are very right—replied Mrs. Holmes—I have thought of doing it very often; indeed, I did apply to a man that lives hard by, and when he heard my daughter
sing,

sing, he could not help laughing; and, would you believe it, when she had done, the impertinent fellow told me, that the best thing I could do, was to put my daughter apprentice to a rat catcher, for that her pipe would call all the rats in the neighbourhood together as nicely as the old Heathen piper, Orpheus, who went to Old Nick to look for his wife!

"I would not apply to no more of them, as I did not like to put up with their skits, which, by the bye, is nothing but envy, and so she shall stay at home, and entertain me and my friends, which she does so well that I would not part with her on any account."

Night being far advanced, Matilda proposed going to bed, when Mrs. Holmes said as she was going to continue with them, there was no occasion for her to have a separate lodging, as she could sleep with Mary.

Matilda gladly accepted this proposition, and when they retired to rest, she asked Mary who taught her to sing so well? the girl modestly thanked her for the compliment, and said that she wished she deserved it, but, — she added — I improved a little while Miss Maria was here: she, poor young lady, sung most delightfully."

Matilda enquired who this Maria was? Mary told her she was the daughter of Mr. Hodges, that, a young gentleman brought her there

as

as his wife, and when we found they were not married, my mother was very angry, and told the lady of it, who took on very much, and would not be comforted.

"She was with us a month, when the gentleman, Mr. Harvey, left her; she always seemed melancholy, but this turned her brain. One morning she left us, and we have since heard that she is dead."

"When you fainted away, two gentlemen came from Mr. Harvey, to enquire after her, and we told them of her unhappy fate, which they appeared quite strangers to."

Matilda was greatly affected at the fate of this unfortunate young creature, but took no manner of

notice, that she knew any thing of her story, as it might be the means of discovering herself.

Mary appeared to be a girl not destitute of feeling, and had she been blessed with the advantage of example, and a good education, would have been no very contemptible acquisition to genteel society.

They then retired to rest, but Matilda, whose heart was too overcome with sorrow to sleep, ruminated upon her situation. She saw it was by industry alone, that she must gain her future subsistence. Friends! alas! she had heard there were such, but she had never had the good fortune to meet with them.

Sometimes

Sometimes the thought of Edward, and then the remembrance of the injuries she had suffered, would fire her bosom with anger; he belonged to that family who treated her with such cruelty. But then again, her imagination painted him beside her, she fancied she saw the well-known smile, and heard him in gentle accent say, "I cannot help the faults of others, blame not your Edward for his mother's cruelty."

However she resolved to think of him no more; the rest of her days must be spent in labour, and in a few short years death would close her in his cold but quiet arms.

With these reflections she somewhat composed her mind. "Oh," she exclaimed—how many things
 She

She resided in this family a considerable time; their mornings were employed in work, and their evenings dedicated to what they called pleasure, which chiefly consisted in a ramble round the town and its environs.

One afternoon Matilda accompanied by Mary went to see the university, and just as she entered the gates, who should present himself to her, but Edward.

This was too much; she retreated a few paces, shrieked, and fainted away. When her senses returned, she found herself in the arms of Edward.

“ Oh, lovely Matilda!—he passionately exclaimed—how many pangs
has

has the thought of never seeing you again occasioned me? how many tedious hours have I passed in secret and sorrowful complainings against those who have so cruelly separated us.

Matilda lost in surprise, and grief, paid little attention to this discourse, but looking round her, found that her companion had left her; she anxiously enquired after her; he said she was extremely terrified at seeing her so indisposed, and was gone to fetch her mother to her assistance.

Several gentlemen were now collected round them; and gazed at Matilda with looks of curiosity and surprise, which Edward perceiving did but encrease her confusion and distress, begged them to retire.

He

He now enquired into her present situation, and whether she still continued in his family?

Matilda related to him what had happened in the castle, after he went to the university, the ill treatment she had experienced, and her subsequent escape. He begged to know her present residence, which she acquainted him with, after having enjoined him to secrecy; for should it be discovered, she would be forced back again to the scene of her former miseries.

She told him that although she was with people of such low condition, that she had met with more kindness from them, than she had ever experienced since her mother's death.

He

“ Oh,

"Oh, thou too lovely fair—said he—since fate has been so kind as to direct your steps towards me, sure, you will not refuse me the happiness of being sometimes blest with a sight of you?"

"Alas!—replied Matilda—we must not see each other, it will be the height of imprudence; for if our unhappy loves should once be discovered, we should both be rendered miserable; for never will your mother consent to our union."

"Your prudence charms me, my dearest angel; order it as you please; but sure you may indulge me with your correspondence, which may remain inviolably secret to all."

"She told him that her companion, Emily, seemed a truly girl, and in whom

In two years, I shall be of age, master of myself and fortune; then if Matilda will bless me with her hand, I shall have it in my power to reward that virtue I have so often admired."

His behaviour was so kind, frank, and ingenuous, and the little advocate in her bosom pleaded so irresistibly in his favour, that they got the better of her resolves.

The idea of parting with the first choice of her heart, grieved her to the soul, she therefore agreed to give him the meeting next evening in a field, a short distance from her residence.

She told him that her companion, Mary, seemed a trusty girl, and in whom

whom they might repose confidence. She therefore would make her acquainted with her history and misfortunes, as well as the rise and progress of their attachment to each other, as it would be impossible to meet him without her concurrence.

They now saw Mrs. Holmes and Mary approach them. Matilda took her leave of Edward, who respectfully bowing, wished her a good afternoon, hoping she would not have a return of her indisposition.

Mary and her mother were much surprised at seeing her so soon recovered—"Lord—cried Mrs. Holmes—I thought you was dying, poor young lady, you are always being frightened, what the plague was it frightened you now?"

Matilda said it was impossible to account for sudden illness.

“ Well, Miss—the added, in an elevated tone of voice—I hope I have not offended you?”

“ Oh, dear madam—replied Matilda—it is impossible I can be offended, when you are so anxious for my safety, and have so much goodness as to enquire thus tenderly after my health.”

This compliment greatly tickled her vanity. She took Matilda by the hand, and begged she would return home with her, and told her how Mary came running home, and crying, she was sure Matilda was dead, which terrified me so much, that

that without bonnet and cloak, I came to see what was the matter.

Matilda apologised for giving her so much trouble, and assured her that she was bound in gratitude ever to bear in remembrance her goodness and humanity towards her.

When Matilda and Mary were retired to their apartment, Mary addressed her, saying, she was certain that there was some secret cause for her being so suddenly indisposed.

Matilda now thought this a good introduction for her to break her secret to Mary, and accordingly related her whole story without the least reserve; and also informed her of their intended meeting.

Mary said it would give her great pleasure, if it was in her power to assist her, that she might depend on her secrecy, and that she would exert herself as much to serve them as though it was an affair of her own.

They rose early in the morning in order to get their work done betimes, that they might not be disappointed in the evening; but just as they were preparing to go out, a servant came from a lady with a quantity of work, which was obliged to be finished by the morning; this at once put an end to their meeting Edward for that evening, as they were obliged to work the greatest part of the night.

Mary

Mary appeared more chagrined than Matilda, as she wished to gratify her curiosity by a sight of Matilda's lover. Matilda being thus prevented from keeping her word, determined to go the next evening.

While they were talking on this subject, Mr. Jason and his brother came in; they said they had just taken four tickets from a company of strolling players, and they solicited the honour of Matilda's and Mary's company.

Matilda returned her acknowledgements for their polite offer, but said they could not accept it, having too much business to be finished that evening, to be able to attend to pleasure.

N 3 Nevertheless

Nevertheless, her mother was very fond of plays, and would be highly delighted with an opportunity of seeing one; and that it would be doing her a very great favour if they would permit her mother to accompany them in their stead.

The gentlemen very complaisantly acquiesced in her request, and when Mrs. Holmes entered the room, they enquired if she was disengaged, and if not, they should be glad of her company, as the young ladies were busy.

"Oh, yes—she cried—I shall be vastly obliged to you, and will get myself ready directly." Accordingly she was dressed in a few minutes.

nutes, and escorted by her two
beaus, set off for the play.

They had not been gone long,
when two gentlemen came into the
shop where Matilda was at work;
as she lifted up her eyes, to her sur-
prise and astonishment, she perceived
one of them to be Ernest.

The sight of one so obnoxious to
her feelings, alarmed her to that
degree, that, unknowing what she
did, she threw down her work, ran
out of the room, and got into a
field at the back of the house, where,
to her no less surprise, she saw Ed-
ward coming towards her; the rea-
son of whose visit was to enquire
the cause of his late disappointment,
and how she came not to fulfil her
promise?

She

She told him in a few words what occasioned her disappointing him, and the cause of her present alarm, and entreated him to devise some means of protecting her from the brutality of his brother.

He seemed greatly disconcerted, promised her his protection, but said it was very probable that she had passed unobserved by Ernest.

This thought was a great comfort to her troubled mind, but she was not long permitted to entertain it; for presently she saw Mary in search of her, she immediately flew to her, and tremblingly enquired whether those gentlemen were gone? and whether they had made any enquiries respecting her?

Mary

Mary said that one of the gentlemen was the eldest son of lady Harvey, and that he had come to discharge his account for the board and lodging of Miss Maria; that after he had settled the bill, he was very inquisitive after her, and asked who the lady was that ran out of the shop when he first came in, and if her name was not Matilda? I said no, that the person he saw go out of the room was the servant, who I had sent of a message: but he would not believe me; saying, she had not the look of a servant; but finding I would give him no further account, he went away cursing and swearing, and said he was certain that he very well knew who it was, and that all the world should not prevent his having you.

This

This was not very comfortable news for Matilda. Mary advised her immediately to return home, lest they should come round that way to look for her.

"Oh, Heavens!"—said Matilda—what will now become of me! I have no friend on earth but you, my dearest Mary; and if you desert me, I don't know what I shall do. For Heaven's sake protect and save a wretched orphan; for he will spare no pains to get me into his power again, and then my ruin will be inevitable."

The gentle tears of compassion now flowed from the eyes of the kind-hearted girl. "Alas!"—said she—what can I do? I have no power to assist you against so rich

a man; it will be impossible for me to protect you from his merciless hands; but suppose I entreat the assistance of Mr. Jason, and perhaps when he finds another gentleman interfere, he may give up the pursuit of you, lest the law should call upon him to account for his cruel persecution.

Mrs. Holmes and the two gentlemen soon after returned, and seeing Matilda so distressed, it being impossible that she could conceal her emotion, they enquired the cause of her uneasiness?

Matilda frankly, and without the smallest disguise, informed them of her unfortunate situation, and throwing herself on her knees, implored their protection.

To

To behold so lovely a girl as Matilda craving protection, would have engaged the most indifferent in her defence.

Mr. Jason took upon him this office, entreated her to be happy; for, at the hazard of his life, he would protect her from the hands of such a villain.

They all treated her with kindness, and endeavoured to alleviate her apprehensions, inasmuch that she began to think she was perfectly secure under their protection.

The next day they were surprised by a letter, which came to desire Mrs. Holmes and Mary would immediately come to the sister of Mrs. Holmes, who was taken dangerously ill,

ill, so that her life was apprehended to be in danger; it being necessary that somebody should remain at home, Matilda voluntarily offered her services.

Mary objected to the offer, as she did not like to leave her alone, lest Mr. Harvey should renew his visit.

Mr. Jason replied, and said that should not prevent their going; for he would be happy to stay with her and keep her company.

When they were gone, Matilda sat down to work and requested Mr. Jason would amuse the time by reading to her. He readily complied, and sat himself beside her. Taking hold of a picture she always wore round her neck, he tenderly

said, " I presume this is the happy possessor of your affections."

" Alas!—replied Matilda, the tear standing in her eye—the object of my affections has long been enclosed in the cold but happy arms of death!"

" Indulge not such melancholy thoughts—he added—some other man may prove, perhaps, as worthy, and be so happy as to supply the place of that favoured person?"

" Oh, Heaven, that there was such a person!—exclaimed Matilda—but 'tis impossible to supply the place of my dear mother."

What?—he replied—has no gentleman been so happy as to make
some

some little impression on the heart of the lovely Matilda? if it has not been susceptible of the tender passion, permit me to have the honour of engaging your affections."

"Sir—said Matilda—I think it is highly improper for a gentleman who is avowedly engaged to another, to talk upon this subject, and should you persevere in this discourse I must certainly leave you."

"It would be improper, dearest Matilda, were I engaged—he replied—but I am as free as air, and as disengaged as your lovely self."

Matilda replied—"I understood you were on the point of marriage with Miss Mary, the daughter of Mrs. Holmes!"

"D—n Mrs. Holmes' daughter!—he cried in a rage—how dare she advance such a falsehood!"

"Sir—answered Matilda—who ever obtains any preference in my opinion, must know how to regulate his passion, and not let it get so much the better of him that he should use bad language, and swear in my presence. However, I am certain you have given her some hopes or she never would have entertained the idea."

"I believe—said he, seeming to recollect himself—once, when I was disguised in liquor, I talked a little nonsense to her, but was by no means serious, and did it only by way of entertaining myself, nor did I think

think what I at that time said would dwell upon her mind; indeed, it is absurd to suppose it possible that a girl with neither person, rank or fortune, should think that I had serious intentions of marrying her."

"Then, Sir—answered Matilda—I have none of these qualities, and therefore beg you will not talk nonsense to me; and if you do not wish to affront me, I beg you will instantly desist."

"Pardon me, dearest Matilda—added he—you are very different from her. By Heavens, there is no comparison! and although I am a stranger to your birth, I am thoroughly persuaded it is perfectly befitting the most lovely maid my eyes have ever beheld."

Matilda took little notice of his compliment, as she regarded it as a piece of raillery gentlemen frequently accustom themselves to. She told him that as he had uttered so much nonsense, it was now time to talk sense; for she was certain that a man of honour would never condescend to say what he did not mean.

“ There is—continued Matilda—a prudent and much-to-be applauded maxim that young ladies should always arm themselves with; which is, never to put confidence in the declarations of their lovers; but to be always on their guard, and let their attention be strongly fraught with circumspection and suspicion, when they usher into the conversation the tender tale of their affections,

ons, and believe they are only labouring to deceive. Then, should their suspicions be well grounded, they meet with no disappointment; for men are as changeable as weathercocks, and turn which way the wind of their inclinations happens to carry them; therefore they should never think him sure till they are united in that sacred knot, which cannot be untied."

Here their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of his brother and Edward, who, Matilda supposed had contrived some excuse to introduce himself to her company.

They spent the evening very agreeably, and just as Edward was taking leave, Mrs. Holmes and Mary returned. They begged he would

do them the honour of staying supper, which he with great politeness declined.

“ Well, then—said Mrs. Holmes—I hope you will do me the honour of a visit sometimes with Mr. Jason?” He made her a low bow, and said he certainly would do himself the pleasure of waiting on her the first opportunity, and then left them.

Matilda asked them the success of their visit, and enquired how they had left their relation? they replied they found her much better than they expected; Mary complaining that she was much fatigued, they soon after retired.

Matilda, as usual, indulged a few melancholy ideas to steal on her imagination,

gination, which fortunately kept her from sleeping; for they had not been in bed more than two hours, when she heard a coach drive up to the door, and somebody alight from it and go into the parlour.

She immediately awoke Mary, who went to the window in order to discover whose carriage it was.

But what was their horror and astonishment, when by the lamps before it, they perceived it was Mr. Harvey's. Hearing some voices rather loud in the parlour, their fears induced them to listen to their discourse, when they heard Ernest say, "deliver her to me this instant, or to-morrow I will have your goods seized on, for not paying your rent; but

but agree to my desire, and I will make you a present of fifty pounds."

Mrs. Holmes made answer and said, that Matilda was gone to bed, and that it would frighten her very much, therefore she hoped he would not be so cruel as to disturb her out of her sleep.

"Well, then—he replied—at this time to-morrow night I will call for her, and then you may prepare for my coming." They then heard them advance to the door, upon which Matilda and Mary retired to their own room, and locked themselves in.

Soon after which they heard the coach drive off, and Matilda threw herself on the bed. "Oh, Heavens!

she

—she exclaimed—how many dangers have I gone through to escape that persevering bad man? and yet, oh cruel fate! must be delivered to him at last!”

The agony she was in, produced on Mary an effect which Matilda contemplated with some degree of hope; she sincerely sympathised in her sorrows; and said she could not have believed that her mother would have been so cruel, but that she never could withstand the tempting, golden bait, with which he lured her to abet his wicked designs; “but don’t be alarmed, Miss, we will disappoint them at last; for I will get up in the morning, before any body is stirring, and go to a friend of mine, who lives in a family a few miles off. Her lady is a very humane

mane good woman; and I dare say
will assist in protecting you."

Matilda surprised and charmed at
the friendship of this kind-hearted
girl, embraced her with the utmost
thankfulness for her proposal, and
agreed to it without hesitation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

